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Secrets Of The Central Intelligence Agency: Its Weakness, Strength

BY RAY CROMLEY

WASHINGTON (NEA)—The highest levels of government are trying to determine whether the Central Intelligence Agency's secret intelligence is accurate enough to insure the security of the United States.

The Cuba disaster raised doubts.

These are some of the questions: How reliable is CIA? How often is it right and how often wrong? What are its methods? What are its strengths and weaknesses?

How did an intelligence agency get into this kind of an operation?

The explanation goes back to the World War II Office of Strategic Services, which gathered intelligence. OSS also had a division called "Special Operations" whose men were trained in sabotage, guerrilla raiding, and training and working with native underground units.

OSS was broken up at the end of the war. Part of its staff moved to the State Department. But CIA inherited the twin tradition of intelligence gathering and special operations.

The special operations end of CIA is somewhat of a free-wheeling business. An agent sees an opportunity for sabotage, or for encouraging a strike, or for helping out some friendly revolutionaries. He'll get in touch with CIA headquarters to seek approval and to get the men and supplies he'll need. If it is a sizeable operation CIA Director Allen Welch Dulles will check it with the President and the State and Defense Departments.

One example: The CIA naturally watched Guatemala carefully and in the early 1950s as Communists moved in under the leadership of Col. Jacobo Arbenz. When the Red bloc shipped weapons to Guatemala, presumably against us neighbors, the CIA recommended arms.

The Defense Department supplied arms to the threatened Communists. When a friendly new continental neighbor of the United States, Brazil,



CIA'S DULLES: The doors are usually closed.

CIA men also are credited with securing vital information in an unfriendly country, must make close friends with anti-government men. They are going to be his best sources of information. They will be the ones to help him get in and out. These men will want something in return — a few guns, a little dynamite, a little help in training recruits. If the agent wants to keep close to his sources, he'll find it pays to help these men. And besides, it helps to keep an enemy government unstable or to help friends overthrow it.

Why not put a separate organization into unfriendly countries to handle these special operations? CIA agents say then there would be two groups working with the same contacts. They claim that would lead to trouble and perhaps disaster.

But since the Cuban disaster, there is growing pressure with these two CIA units in the U.S. to merge them. The State and Defense Departments are in favor of the idea that

the doors are usually closed.

The CIA trained Cubans in guerrilla warfare in Guatemala and Fidel Castro proposed a military operation. Changes were made at the request of the State Department, the Joint Chiefs of Staff and the President.

State and Defense then agreed the revised plans were feasible and desirable. Cubans carried out the plan. They ran into a trap and failed. The populace did not rise against Castro.

Evidence here is that the operation was poorly planned, poorly carried out. It wasn't a secret from Castro. The landing area was a natural trap. The landing was too big and complicated for a guerrilla landing, too small and disorganized for establishing a beachhead against force.

This points up one weakness of the CIA. It has no experience in organizing sizeable coordinated operations. It has "officers" experienced in training men to blow up bridges, to hit and run. It has facilities for drawing on government departments for men, equipment and transportation.

But this was CIA's first major assignment in training landing forces able to hold their own against a trained army. CIA was not prepared.

But note that the feasibility of this operation was approved by key members of the Joint Chiefs of Staff and by the Department of State.

It achieved an outstanding success in 1953 when it secured the text of Nikita Khrushchev's denunciation of Stalin before it was edited for outside consumption. Publication was a strong blow against the Communist parties of the U.S. and Europe.

But CIA failed in not predicting North Korea's invasion of South Korea based by CIA on the capability the Red Chinese had to invade. This was a major intelligence and technical failure of the CIA.